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A voluntary partnership with private landowners

IN THIS ISSUE

Grass, Cattle and Quail in South Carolina
by Michael Hall, State GLCI Coordinator, South Carolina

Grazing Demonstration Projects in Kentucky
by David Stipes, NRCS Ky

Florida Cattleman Benefits from GLCI Project
by Pete Deal, State Rangeland Management Specialist

GLCI Spotlight: The American Sheep Industry
This issue highlights the American Sheep Industry and two individuals who serve on the National GLCI Steering Committee:

AGGIE HELLE
Dillon, Montana
FRANK PHILP
Shoshoni, Wyoming

The Chair's Corner
Read about some of the activities your chairman has been involved in since the last issue.

Grass, Cattle and Quail in South Carolina

by Michael Hall, State GLCI Coordinator

The S.C. Grasslands Conservation Coalition's March meeting focused on the task of identifying common ground between livestock producers and wildlife managers addressing quail habitat.

Coalition leadership had recognized the need for developing a proactive approach to addressing wildlife habitat issues on grazing lands in South Carolina.

Quail, being a keystone species requiring diverse habitat, was chosen as the target species although it is recognized that many other grassland and edge species can benefit from a successful effort of organizations represented by the Coalition.

Mr. Rocky Evans, Executive Vice President of Quail Unlimited, along with Mr. Billy Dukes, Small Game Supervisor, and Ms. Judy Barnes, Wildlife Biologist, with the SC Department of Natural Resources, presented the status of quail population. Mr. Evans cited a 70% decline over the past 25 years in 17 S.E. states. The primary cause of the decline being a loss of habitat, they enumerated the demise of the family farm, clean, large-scale row crop fields and conversion of open land to pines through the CRP program as major contributors to the loss.

Dr. Steve Meadows, Director of the Clemson University Edisto Research and Education Center, along with Dr. Harold Hupp, Clemson University Animal and Veterinary Science Department, and Mr. Brian Bolt, Executive Director of the S.C. Cattlemen's Association, represented the state livestock producers.

Dr. Meadows profiled the South Carolina cattle operations as being cow-calf, with the majority of the herds maintaining 25-30 breeding animals on an annual basis. Dr. Hupp and Mr. Bolt defined the typical producers as being part-time and owning or controlling 30-100 acres of open land dedicated to producing grass. Fescue and Bermuda grass were agreed on as the dominant perennial grasses in the state. It was noted that while all livestock producers were not avid hunters, as a group they were unquestionably dedicated to conservation of natural resources. This strong sense of stewardship resulted in a keen interest in game and non-game wildlife species.

(Continued on next page)

. . . Grass, Cattle and Quail

(Continued from page 1)

Dr. Meadows indicated that most producers would be receptive to altering some management practices when they understood the issues and had alternative practices that were compatible with their production requirements.

Dr. Larry Butler, Director of the USDA-NRCS Grazing Lands Institute, challenged the group to search for multiple answers, in light of the fact that in only a few situations would a decision ultimately be either cattle or quail.

Based on the goals of 1) creating and maintaining quail habitat, 2) improving communications among resource managers, livestock producers and landowners, 3) maintaining landscapes for compatible production of cattle and quail and 4) landowner education, the consensus of the group was to develop an integrated resource management initiative. This initiative will address quail habitat management on S.C. grazing lands.

The Coalition, utilizing the technical advisors, will develop the outreach programs and select an area to target for implementation.

KENTUCKY

Danny Ray Spalding, St. Catharine Farm Manager, representatives of the Kentucky Heritage RC&D Council, Extension Service, NRCS and other sponsors are shown viewing some of the practices implemented on the farm.

GRAZING DEMONSTRATION PROJECTS IN KENTUCKY

by David Stipes, NRCS Kentucky

The livestock industry makes a tremendous contribution to the overall agricultural economy in Kentucky. Because of a favorable climate and productive soils, Kentucky livestock producers can produce a broad range of forage species that can be harvested by grazing animals. Many agricultural producers in Kentucky have traditionally depended upon tobacco as a major cash crop. Because of changes in the tobacco industry, many producers are now relying more heavily on livestock production with grazing systems as a way to recover income no longer available from tobacco production.

With good management techniques, forage and livestock production is being improved all across the state. Demonstrations of improved management techniques have been established at five locations in Kentucky through the technical and financial support of NRCS with cooperation from the University of Kentucky, College of Agriculture, Resource Conservation and Development Councils (RC&D), Conservation Districts and others. These demonstrations have been established on farms that represent conditions commonly found on farms in specific regions of the state. On each of these farms improved grazing management strategies, as well as structural measures and forage improvement practices, have been implemented. Field tours have been conducted on each farm as a method of providing outreach to producers in the area. In addition, the Kentucky Grazing School has been held on one farm twice.

For further information contact David Stipes, NRCS State Agronomist in Kentucky at 859-224-7392 or email david.stipes@ky.usda.gov

FLORIDA CATTLEMAN BENEFITS FROM GLCI PROJECT

by Pete Deal, State Rangeland Management Specialist

"Without NRCS, my cows and my farm would be in bad shape," states James Hall. Mr. Hall was speaking of the assistance he received as a result of the Grazing Lands Conservation Initiative (GLCI) demonstration project. With the assistance of the District Conservationist, Crenel Francis, and the State Rangeland Management Specialist, Mr. Hall was able to improve his pastures, protect water quality, and improve his livestock production.

Using technical assistance from the Jefferson Soil and Water Conservation District (SWCD) and the Natural Resources Conservation Service (NRCS), combined with funding from the Environmental Protection Agency (EPA), Mr. Hall was able to make significant improvements on his cattle operation. The demonstration project was selected by the Florida GLCI Coalition to demonstrate how local farmers and ranchers can implement conservation practices and improve livestock production efficiency and protect or improve their natural resources.

Mr. Hall wanted to increase his forage production and increase the amount of beef produced per acre. Beginning with that information, the NRCS worked with Mr. Hall to develop a conservation plan to meet his goals. The plan developed by Mr. Hall included pasture planting, fencing, grazing management, livestock watering facilities, nutrient management, and pest management.

To increase forage production Mr. Hall selected "Tifton-9" Bahiagrass because of its long growing season and low fertilizer requirement. Fertilizer applications needed for successful establishment were based on soil test recommendations. Weeds were controlled using a combination of tillage and chemical treatments. Mr. Hall also installed cross fences and livestock watering facilities to allow him to use a rotational gazing system.

Mr. Hall continues to work closely with the Jefferson Soil and Water Conservation District and the NRCS to ensure that the conservation plan for his operation works to benefit his cattle operation and his land.

FLORIDA

Announcements!

KNIGHT TO HEAD NRCS

South Dakota native Bruce Knight has been appointed chief of the Natural Resources Conservation Service (NRCS) for the U. S. Department of Agriculture. Knight is currently vice president of public policy for the National Corn Growers Association. He served as a lobbyist for the association on issues such as environment, conservation and water quality. Knight served as a legislative assistant for Sen. Bob Dole in 1995, advising the majority leader on agriculture and environmental policy. From 1989 to 1995, Knight worked at the National Association of Wheat Growers as a liaison with Congress and the administration in domestic farm programs. He also worked as a legislative assistant for Rep. Fred Grandy of Iowa and Sen. James Abnor of South Dakota, specializing in farm policy. Knight is originally from Gann Valley and is a graduate of South Dakota State University.

GLCI SPOTLIGHT

AMERICAN SHEEP INDUSTRY

The American Sheep Industry (ASI) is a federation of individual sheep and goat producers as well as state organizations. ASI is one of the founding organizations of GLCI and supports the National Steering Committee with two representatives.

ASI represents nearly 70,000 sheep and goat producers in the United States and has associate members in national breed associations and businesses directly and indirectly involved in the industry. Their funds are utilized to fulfill the goals set out by producer leaders. Affiliated with ASI is the American Sheep Industry Women, whose members actively support the association in promotion and legislative activities. ASI believes the American sheep producers are best equipped to lead the efforts in setting a successful course for the organization. That is why their producer members establish the goals of ASI. Their goals are:

- Develop an industry vision for the future.
- Be an advocate of public policy to protect, promote and support the economical viability of the industry.
- Create strong national and international markets for lamb and wool through advertising, promotion and marketing.
- Advance and coordinate science and technology of production and marketing.
- Promote communication and cooperation among all segments of the industry, related business and government agencies.

For more information about the American Sheep Industry, log on to their web site at www.sheepusa.org or contact your state sheep association. Aggie Helle of Dillon, Montana, and Frank Philp of Shoshoni, Wyoming, represent ASI on the GLCI National Steering Committee.

Aggie Helle was raised on a sheep and cattle ranch in Beaverhead County, Montana and graduated with a Bachelor of Science degree from Western Montana College (currently University of Montana-Western). After they were married, Aggie and Joe Helle moved to Dillon where they established Rebish and Helle Partnership with Aggie's brother. The operation manages a thriving sheep operation, utilizing Akbash guard dogs and herders. As producers of extremely fine wool, the partnership has been able to move into international markets. They also manage a farming operation with alfalfa, malt barley, spring wheat, and winter wheat, and previously also managed a cow/calf operation. Joe Helle has a master's degree in Range Science from the University of Idaho.

The Helles' sons, Tom and John, now manage independent ranch operations that also include a purebred Rambouillet sheep operation and cattle. They also help out with Rebish and Helle Partnership from time to time.

Both Joe and Aggie have served in many capacities with the Montana Woolgrowers' Association and the American Sheep Industry and were co-recipients of the "McClure Silver Ram" Award, attesting to their dedication to the industry. Aggie also serves as the rancher representative for the Center for Invasive Plant Materials Board for Montana State University and has been elected to co-chair the Natural Resources Council for ASI. Mrs. Helle has been appointed by the President to serve on the state FSA Committee.

The Helles have demonstrated that sheep are environmentally friendly and can enhance rangeland in Montana when managed properly. Rebish and Helle Partnership has even provided sheep for noxious weed and brush management as far away as New Hampshire.

Wyoming state legislator Frank Philp and his family are an integral part of the Philp Sheep Company, a diversified operation with range cattle and sheep, irrigated farms, and livestock feeding and finishing. Frank's immediate family includes his wife, Janet, and daughter Aley (now at the University of Wyoming). Representative Philp's education includes a bachelor's degree in range management from the University of Wyoming.

Philp Sheep Company, operated by Frank, his father, brother, and sister, is located in the Shoshoni-Lysite area of central Wyoming. The cattle operation is commercial Angus and Angus cross cattle, with the calves weaned and fed on-farm to about 800 pounds. Irrigated crops include alfalfa, corn silage, barley, and grass hay. The Rambouillet sheep operation also includes marketing wholesale cuts of lamb through Mountain States-Rosen Lamb and Wool Cooperative. The lamb-processing cooperative has members throughout the Western states and is being organized with leadership from the Wyoming Woolgrower's Association.

Frank Philp has served in the Wyoming House of Representatives for 10 years. He currently serves on the Select Water Committee, the Appropriations Committee and the Rules and Procedures Committee. Rep. Philp previously served on the Agriculture, Public Lands and Water Resources Committee, and the Tourism, Recreation and Wildlife Committee. ■

THE CHAIR'S CORNER

The National GLCI Steering Committee held their annual spring meeting in Washington, DC on March 4 at the Holiday Inn, Rosslyn. Forty-two people, including steering committee members, advisory board members, speakers and guests, attended the meeting. Some of the topics and decisions of the National Steering Committee include:

• **Second National Conference Grazing Lands**-Nashville Convention Center, December 7-10, 2003. The National Committee will sponsor a conference pin. The program committee determined the four speaking categories. The exhibit committee will distribute information on commercial and non-profit booth spaces in June.

• **Research and Education**-Ev Byington, Agriculture Research Service, reviewed what is happening with research in the ARS and A.J. Dye, Cooperative Research and Extension, reviewed funding and research for extension.

• **Farm Bill Update**-Rosemarie Watkins, American Farm Bureau, and Ed Burton, NRCS, reviewed the key elements of the 2002 Farm Bill.

• **Jason Campbell**-National Cattlemen's Beef Association spoke on behalf of the Sportsmen and Ranchers for Land Stewardship, which consists of producers and other groups. This group's major focus is agency budgets, range management concerns, range monitoring, multiple use of public lands and weed control.

• **Office of Management and Budget**-Jason Weller listed OMB responsibilities which included: Advising the President on Economic Issues; evaluating Federal programs; his principal assignment to NRCS and FSA; auditing cost-share programs and budgeting processes.

• **Merlin Bartz-Special Assistant to USDA Undersecretary Mark Rey**-Reviewed the FY-02 Appropriations language and 2002 Farm Bill. Mentioned the importance of GLCI input in implementing the Farm Bill.

• **Pearlie Reed-NRCS Chief**-Reviewed his speech that he delivered for the Appropriations Committee Hearing emphasizing the importance of conservation on the ground. Partnerships are important and the conservation operations account underpins the entire national private lands conservation infrastructure. It leverages more than a billion dollars annually in state and local conservation investments.

• **GLCI Fall Meeting**-National Steering Committee, October 24,25, 2002 in Wisconsin. There will be a tour of Pasture-based Dairy Farms on Friday and business meeting on Saturday.

The GLCI National Steering Committee would like to thank Pearlie Reed for his support for GLCI over the past several years. We look forward to working with the new Chief of NRCS, Bruce Knight, on grazing land issues.

Bob Drake, Chairman
National GLCI Steering Committee

GLCINews

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Visit the GLCI homepage at http://www.glci.org

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